

Extending the deadline for a political subdivision to change its general election date

HB 3619 by Raymond (Zaffirini)

DIGEST: HB 3619 would have given the governing body of a political subdivision other than a county until December 31, 2008, to change the date it holds its general election for officers to another authorized uniform election date.

GOVERNOR'S REASON FOR VETO:

“In 1993, the legislature enacted a statute requiring local political subdivisions to set a fixed date for their elections and stick to it, so voters would know each cycle when elections will be held. House Bill No. 3619 attempts to extend for the fifth time the deadline for political subdivisions, other than counties, to change the date on which the subdivision holds its general election for officers.

“In 1993, the legislature established a deadline of December 31, 1993, for setting election dates. The date was then pushed back to December 31, 1997 (by the 75th session). December 31, 1999 (by the 76th session), December 31, 2004 (by the 78th session), and December 31, 2005 (by the 79th session).

“House Bill No. 3619 would move the deadline again, to December 31, 2008.

“While some of the deadline extensions were necessary in sessions in which the legislature cut back the number of uniform election dates, we have now reached the point where the cities and other local subdivisions need to stop moving their election dates. Voters need to know when a political subdivision holds its elections.

“If Texas is serious about increasing turnout, the state must stop changing the time and place for elections, and set them permanently so voters will know when they can vote.”

RESPONSE: Rep. Richard Raymond, the bill’s author, had no comment on the veto.

Sen. Judith Zaffirini, the Senate sponsor, said: “Laredoans, especially city officials, share my disappointment that Gov. Rick Perry vetoed HB 3619 by Rep. Richard Raymond. Consistent with our recently amended charter, this legislation would have extended from December 31, 2005, to December 31, 2008, the deadline for which a local government, other than a county, may change its general election date. At the request of city of Laredo officials, I sponsored HB 3619 so the city could change its general election day to coincide with school district elections. According to city officials, this change would have increased voter turnout and lowered costs. What’s more, representatives from the High Plains Underground Water Conservation District No. 1 in Lubbock also requested this flexibility as a cost-saving measure. Although Gov. Perry stated wrongly that it would depress turnout, HB 3619 would have increased turnout for local elections and also saved taxpayer dollars.”

NOTES: HB 3619 passed the House on the Local, Consent, and Resolutions Calendar and was not analyzed in a *Daily Floor Report*.